Lesson 59 - Teaching Children About Healthful Living

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1. Introduction

The boy was at his father's funeral. He sat quiet, staring ahead, his eyes unfocused. No one at the funeral felt sorry for the orphaned boy. The boy himself felt no sorrow, no remorse, no guilt. But perhaps he should have. Because he was the cause of the funeral. He had shot his father in the chest with a shotgun that he carried in his truck.

Perhaps there should have been sorrow for the father, murdered by his own son. But there wasn't. It was town gossip that the father had started his sons on illegal drugs at the age of twelve. "They'll get drugs sooner or later," the father had said, "might as well come from me instead of some stranger."

The man had been a long-distance truck driver. He saw his sons rarely, and he shared the pills, the stimulants, and the depressants he took while driving with his teenage sons. One day the father and son were both "on pills" and a fight started. It ended with the father in a pool of blood, the son standing dazed over him, and the sheriff rushing to the scene.

This story is true, and it happened in a community of less than a hundred people. Drugs, vices, and a destructive lifestyle are no longer problems just for disadvantaged children and youth. Our children and teenagers everywhere are being poisoned, devitalized, and sickened by the unhealthy lifestyles being taught to them by schools, parents, and friends.

The current state of our children's physical, moral, and emotional health has never been lower. If we are to have a society worth living in, then we must launch a full-scale effort to educate every child about the virtues of healthful living and Hygienic practices. Healthful living is the only salvation for damaged youth and children, and we must learn how to teach them the most basic necessity of life: how to grow and prosper in health and happiness.

1.1 What Is a Healthy Child?

Few people have seen a healthy child. You may have seen children that are not currently sick, cranky, or irritable. You may have a child that is usually a source of great pleasure for you. But unless the child has been thoroughly taught and raised according to the principles of healthful living and Hygiene, then it is doubtful that he or she is truly or completely healthy.

In fact, there are few totally healthy people, adults or children, in today's world. Dr. Herbert M. Shelton is the world's foremost teacher of healthful living for both children and adults. He has raised children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren according to the teachings of Natural Hygiene and Life Science. His book, *The Hygienic Care of Children*, is still the standard work on healthy child rearing. He has this

to say about what constitutes the healthy child:

"There are certain leading characteristics of a normal, healthy, well-nourished child which every parent should become familiar with. Here are the following evidences of health in a child:

1. Mental alertness, brightness.
2. Cheerfulness and a contented disposition.
3. Bright, sparkling, wide-open eyes.
4. A good appetite.
5. Absence of vomiting and regurgitation of food.
6. Normal bowel movements.
7. Very little crying.
8. A steady gain of healthy weight, not fat.
9. Firm elastic flesh with springy muscles.
10. Perfect, sound, continuous sleep all night.
11. Constant growth in health and intelligence.
12. Symmetrical development of muscular tissue.
13. A clear skin complexion.
14. No evidences of pain and discomfort.
15. Freedom from *all* sickness, disease, illness.

A healthy child is a happy child. A healthy son or daughter respects parents and returns the love given. For a child, health is much more than simply freedom from common childhood illnesses. Radiant health in a child indicates vitality, cheer, cooperation, and a pleasant disposition.

Health is the natural gift of childhood. Unfortunately, this gift is often taken from the child by misinformed parents and educators who do not understand the basics of healthful living. A child must be taught how to live in a healthy manner—not because health is an unnatural state that must be learned, but because the child is led astray, miseducated, and seduced by the perversions, shortcomings, and misunderstandings of the modern world.

You who have the knowledge of healthful living must share it with the children of the world—whether they be in your family or in your community. You must become a teacher of healthful living practices to those who are young and look for your guidance. You must teach your children how to live a life that will always be full of health, well-being, and cheer. This lesson teaches you how to instruct the children in your life about the enormous benefits to be obtained from a life of healthy habits and practices.

2. Teaching The Basics

Fortunately, knowing *what* to teach a child is relatively easy. The requirements for health are always the same—whether the person is an infant or great-great grandparent. The eternal and ever-present needs of life, health, and activity are: sunlight, pure water, fresh air, natural food, poise, rest, sleep, exercise, cleanliness, cheer, hope, poise, and freedom from devitalizing habits.

These are the basics of healthful living, and the proper subjects to teach the developing child. Let's look at each of these requirements for health in more detail and see how they may be effectively explained, taught, arid demonstrated to a child.

2.1 Sunshine, Fresh Air, and Exercise

Fortunately, three of the vital requirements for healthful living—sunshine, fresh air, and exercise—are easy to teach children. Every child, from the newborn to the teenager, should receive copious amounts of fresh air and sunshine, coupled with outdoor exercise.

Children have a natural desire for exercise. They call it "play" and they run, jump, tumble, and climb without any encouragement. Instead of scolding children for "wasting" their time in play, they should be encouraged to play or exercise outdoors and almost year-round.

If the child is withdrawn or spends all of his time reading or watching television, the parent should take the child outside for play or walks or day-trips. It is important that the child be taught at an early age that playing outside in the sun and open air is as essential to growing up as is sitting passively in a school classroom.

In fact, most children spend six hours a day sitting behind a classroom desk. While this may be excellent training for desk-bound adults, it is a poor substitute for childhood. If your child is in a conventional school, then make sure that playtime is scheduled after school and before supper.

As long as the child receives encouragement and support from you in natural outside play, then additional teaching about sunshine, air, and exercise is not needed. The child should be taught the value of fresh air in the home, and should have the windows open as much as possible.

2.2 Pure Food and Water

The hardest area of healthful living to teach to children is that of a pure diet. Actually, there would be no difficulty at all in teaching a child about a good diet if it were not for television, public schools, misinformed parents, or ignorant relatives.

A child will eat the same diet as his parents without question if he is not exposed to the negative influences of junk food advertising and peer junk food eating. It is indeed hard to explain to a child why the sugary cereals he sees advertised during his favorite T.V. shows are actually poisonous substitutes for real food. It is difficult to tell a child that the foods his grandparents or aunts or uncles or cousins or friends are eating will make him sick.

When a child is old enough to begin questioning why he cannot eat the same poor foods most of the people in this country eat, then it is time to begin a program of education about proper diet.

Most children cannot understand that if you eat an ice cream cone that you will eventually feel bad and suffer for it. A child's concept of the "future" is poorly formed. A child lives mostly in the present. Not eating a particular food because it may have future harmful effects is a concept many children will have difficulty understanding. In other words, understanding diet and health as a "cause-effect" relationship will be a new concept for a child (and for many adults as well!).

In this case, it is usually best to wait for the "effect" in order to explain the "cause." If your child indulges in junk ' food or other poor food choices, then simply wait until he becomes sick and then very pointedly explain that the reason he is now feeling sick is because of the foods he ate yesterday or last week or last month or whenever.

Every chance you have, use "sickness" as the stick to keep the child on a good diet. Any time someone is sick at his school or in the family, try to show how a poor diet and other unhealthy practices led to the sickness. On the other hand, use happiness as the "carrot" for keeping the child on a good diet.

After a wholesome meal of foods, emphasize how good you feel and how happy you are that you ate such delicious foods. You don't need to overact, but make sure that you are very vocal about how eating good food makes you, the parent, feel good.

After awhile, the child will begin to imitate you. He will express delight at wholesome meals (if you do

the same) and will eventually associate illness with a poor diet.

Parents may also use animals as teachers for their children about proper diet and drink. Show the child that wild animals have their natural diet. They don't buy junk food at the store, but eat things that grow out of the ground. Animals don't drink soda pop; they sip clear cool water.

If a child can be strongly taught that there is a direct relationship between what he eats and how he feels, then he will be better able to follow the optimum Life Science diet. This teaching will take some time and effort by the parent. Without sounding obsessive, the parent should try to get the child to understand that any illnesses or discomfort the child may feel is linked with the foods eaten. After all, even a child can understand what it means to feel "good" or feel "bad."

2.3 Rest and Relaxation

Teaching children the need for rest and relaxation is usually not too hard. Children will play hard and sleep well during their early years. Adults, however, often have a hard time relaxing and resting because of the stress and demands made upon them.

Children too can suffer from stress. School problems, fights with playmates and friends, trying to live up to the parents' expectations—these are all sources of stress for a child and such stress can make a child irritable and unable to relax.

The parent can best help the child by removing all unnecessary stressful situations from the child's life. Parents with unreasonable expectations can cause their child to suffer as much as the ulcer-ridden businessman.

A good way for the parent to teach the child the value of rest and relaxation is to practice these virtues himself. If the parents make a regular habit of having a rest and relaxation time or activity each day, then the child will see that resting and relaxing are as normal to a healthy life as is work and productivity. Many parents are anxious that their children do not grow up lazy or nonproductive. Sometimes this concern makes the parents push the children to succeed in school, sports, or social activities.

For your child's health, adopt a less anxious attitude and encourage the child to develop habits of regular rest and relaxation during the day.

2.4 Fasting and Drugs

Two essential health-promoting practices that children should be taught are fasting and the avoidance of all drugs. In many cases, prescription and over-the-counter drugs are used in childhood illnesses. Without exception, the child's health would improve by employing fasting as one of the methods to overcome disease. Drugs, vaccinations, remedies, herbal treatments, and other so-called cures and preventatives should be exposed as false and dangerous modalities. They interfere with the body's efforts to restore normalcy.

Fortunately, you don't need to do much educating to get a child to avoid pills, bitter medicines, and painful injections. Given a choice, any intelligent person—child or adult—would not swallow the foul drugs or be shot full of "medicine." Our instincts usually try to protect us, but our intellects override our gut feelings. Unfortunately, most people don't realize that they do have a choice or an alternative way of dealing with illness.

The purpose of educating a child in this area is to disillusion him or her about "medicines." If the child never sees his parent swallowing aspirins, antacid tablets, or any other drug, then there is no role model for the child to imitate. If these drugs are never brought into the home or used by other family members, then the child will not enter into the remedy mentality. A child instinctively rejects drugs, pills, and nonfood substances.

The parent should not tell a child that if he "takes his medicine" that he will feel better. Most people use

drugs and medicines because they have an expectation of relief and cure. If the child is never given this expectation nor is taught that an aspirin can remove a headache, for example, then there will be no attraction for the drug. The child usually comes to be an image of parental beliefs and practices.

This approach toward prescription and over-the-counter drugs also applies to illegal drugs. Many adolescents and adults use illegal or "recreational" drugs because they have been raised in a culture that praises and promotes drug use. If the child has been taught, for example, that a particular drug can relieve indigestion and pain, then he will be equally likely to believe that another drug like cocaine, for example, can relieve emotional pain or mental distress.

The most valuable lesson a parent can teach the child is that all drugs, regardless of origin, have absolutely no beneficial powers on the body at all.

Fasting is the healthful approach to dealing with problems that people use drugs for. If you will set the example by fasting when you feel "out of sorts," then the child will accept such activity as normal.

If you have a pet or any animals nearby, take the opportunity to show the child how an animal will refuse food when it feels sick. Whenever your child is sick, he or she normally loses the appetite. During this time, you can explain to the child that his body doesn't want to have food because it is too busy trying to get him well again. Show no concern at all about the child's lack of appetite. Force no food on the child, and demonstrate no worry.

If the child sees that you are relaxed and unconcerned about his lack of appetite while sick, then he will be more likely to want to continue the fast on his own accord. Most difficulties about teaching fasting to children come from anxious relatives and neighbors who can sabotage your efforts. In this case, it is always best to make no mention that you are fasting your child during sickness. Otherwise, if the child hears any adults arguing over fasting, then it may make him feel uncertain.

If your child is fasting, then you should fast as well if at all possible. If fasting is a normal family affair, then the child will have no fears about short fasts. When the child's body has detoxified and an appetite returns, then do not make the mistake of denying the child food when he is truly hungry. Otherwise, he may see fasting as a form of punishment, like being sent to bed without supper.

Among these lines, it is *never* a good idea to either reward *or* punish a child with giving or withholding food. Such use of food as a reward or punishment can cause serious problems in the development of the child and foster destructive eating patterns in his later years.

For example, one young man had been force-fed strawberries as a punishment for not cleaning his plate. This action resulted in the man never wanting to eat another strawberry or almost any fruit at all during his adult years. On the other hand, some adults give or promise their children "treats" or candy or desserts as a reward for some behavior. This is dangerous because the child then associates eating certain types of foods (usually a junk food) with parental approval. Many adult "ice cream addicts" got their start at the hands of well-meaning but misinformed grandparents. Ice-cream eating thus becomes an emotional substitute for approval and security, and a destructive eating pattern is set in motion in early childhood.

There are many other areas of healthful living that you will want to teach your child. Emotional poise, freedom from devitalizing habits, industriousness, happiness, and other qualities may be demonstrated by the parent throughout the day. The young child is like a sponge; he is ready to receive and remember whatever teachings you have to offer, so make sure that you are giving him the best example possible to follow in his life.

3. The Tools For Teaching

Although some hints were given about how to teach a child the basics of healthful living, additional mention about the ways you can use to instruct young people should be helpful. Many of the ways used to teach children are counterproductive. For example, if you punish and scold a child every time that he or she does not live up to your teachings, then the child may become increasingly rebellious and never learn the methods for a happy and long life. You are a partner in the child's preparation for life, not his taskmaster.

How we teach a child is as important as what we teach him or her. There are four general, effective, and harmless ways that you can use to teach children about healthful living.

3.1 Teaching by Example

"Don't do as I do; do as I say," is a remark often used by parents when instructing their children. The truth, however, is this: if a parent wants the child to act positively and develop lifelong healthful habits, then the parent must be a strong example of this as well.

Children learn by imitation. Reasoning and logic are not yet fully developed in a young child. They learn to do things by imitating those around them. If you want your child to have healthy habits, then you must demonstrate these habits in your own life so that the child can imitate them.

You cannot tell your child to behave in a certain manner if you will not following your own strictures. The health and well-being of a child is intimately and irrevocably linked to the health practices of the parents. Your children will only turn out as "good" as you yourself are good. You should not expect more from your children than you yourself are willing to do.

You must be an unquestionable, strong, unfailing, and dedicated exponent of healthful living practices if you want your child to adopt the same. You cannot give your children health; you must show them how to live it.

Here is what Dr. Shelton has to say about the parent as example: "Children pattern themselves after their parents as naturally and spontaneously as they eat or sleep. This is the reason that the right kind of home influences are so important. The child does what he sees his parents do and says what his parents say. See that you are a real parent and a good example for your child, and not merely an occupant at the same house with him."

3.2 Teaching by Association

Children learn not only from their parents, but from other adults and children as well. Whenever possible, you should have your child in the company of similar health-minded people.

If a child is shown that other people besides those in his immediate family also practice healthful habits, then he will be more likely to imitate these positive actions. Finding similar-minded people, however, may be difficult for those that live in rural areas or small towns.

Your best bet is to try to visit other families that have expressed health interests similar to your own. This can be done by contacting other Life Science students who life in your area, or by getting in touch with several of the Hygienic communities or networks that exist throughout the country.

Some families who are intently serious about their well-being often find it advantageous to live in a community situation with other Hygienic families. If nothing else, it is always beneficial to live within the same locale as one or two other Hygienic families so that information can be exchanged and support given during the child-rearing years.

If these suggestions are impractical, then at least try to take a health-minded or Hygienic vacation or trip where your child may meet other children that come from similar backgrounds.

However you approach the problem, it is vital that the child does not feel totally isolated from other people. Any type of social activity, gathering, or family events where health-minded people get together is an excellent opportunity for your child to see others practicing what you have been teaching.

Community and companionship is one of integral requirements for a healthy and productive life. You must not insulate your child from the world, but instead find some type of social situation that will promote the healthy habits that you are trying to instill.

A man may be judged by the company he keeps, but a child's character and habits are molded by the company he is exposed to. Try to choose your friends and associates carefully so that any teachings you may give to the child are also reinforced by those around him.

3.3 Teaching by Instruction

As your child grows older, he or she may be taught the precepts of healthful living through the conventional methods of books, stories, and field trips. Although there are very few Hygienic materials written for children, there are now other children's books that teach healthful living habits.

For example, there are now several books published on vegetarianism for children of all ages, as well as for preteens and early adolescents. There are storybooks that reinforce such teachings as kindness, consideration, fair play, and other positive values. By carefully selecting your child's reading, you can expose him or her to some character-building ideas.

Movies and television can also be used to instruct. Much care and caution should be exercised because most commercially-produced movies and T.V. shows are simply reflections of a culture obsessed with material goods, stimulation, fast foods, money, and exploitation. There are some good children's programs and instructional video tapes, however. Be alert for any of these in educating your child about healthful living.

Perhaps the easiest and most inexpensive way to teach by instruction is a carefully planned field trip. If you want a child to reject meat eating overnight, take them on a tour of an animal stockyard or slaughterhouse. Show them how poorly the animals are treated, and emphasize that if you don't eat animals, such things would not occur. All children can understand and deeply sympathize with cruelty to animals. This is an extreme example, and should be used with caution so as not to shock or traumatize the child.

More positive and enjoyable field trips can be made to parks and wilderness areas. Use the opportunity to show the child how animals live in the wild, and how they take care of all their needs naturally. Encourage the child to identify with such natural living, and to enjoy the outdoors.

Another excellent field trip can be made to orchards and home gardens. Many gardens and orchards in the summer offer outsiders a chance to pick their own fresh produce. Taking your child to a fruit orchard where he can pick his own lunch from a tree will greatly excite him and educate him about man's natural food.

Children love adventures and trips, and they needn't be expensive or far away. By using your imagination, you can take your child to see various sights that will deeply affect and shape his mind toward healthful living habits.

Give the child beneficial, direct experiences in healthful living, and these will make a far greater impression than simply words and advice.

3.4 Your Child As Teacher

You've heard it said that the best way to master a subject is to teach it. So it is with kids and healthful

living. After your child has learned some of the facts about healthful living habits, you should encourage him or her to share these truths with a younger brother or sister or with their friends.

You don't want to make your child into an obnoxious brat who continually badgers people about their unhealthful habits, but you can let your child share his new knowledge with those around him.

If the child has a younger sibling, then give the older child the responsibility for teaching the younger one about healthful habits. Encourage your child to explain to his friends, and, playmates why he doesn't eat meat or take, shots. If this can be done in a nonargumentative way, then the child will feel as if he is sharing privileged knowledge and will be eager to learn more from you.

Do be careful, though. One beautiful Hygienic girl of nine had soon convinced her entire class at school to become vegetarians and no longer eat their friends, the animals. The meat-eating parents of the other children were enraged and threatened by the young girl's behavior, and soon forbade their children to play with her. Your child can learn by teaching, but let such experiences come naturally from the child's desires instead of from your urgings.

4. Overcoming Obstacles In Teaching The Child

Teaching a child about healthful living would be easy if it were not for various obstacles that society, friends, and families sometimes present. Your efforts at educating your child can be undermined and undone by misinformed teachers, spouses, and playmates of the child.

If you want to make your teachings "stick," you need to know how to handle the most common obstacles that will arise during the education of your child in the ways of healthful living.

4.1 Public Schools and Indoctrination

The public education system can often undo in a matter of weeks what you have spent years teaching your child. One mother who practices Natural Hygiene and follows the teachings of Life Science enrolled her son in kindergarten. She stressed to the teacher that the child was raised as a vegetarian, and she wanted her son to eat the lunch she packed for him each day instead of the usual school lunch.

All went well for a few weeks, or so the mother thought. One day she came to school unexpectedly early to take her son on a trip. She arrived at lunchtime, and saw her vegetarian child with a hot dog. The nervous teacher explained that she didn't want the boy to feel different from his classmates, so she gave him what the other kids were eating. The young boy did not know that a hot dog came from a cow or that he was eating an animal. He thought he was getting an acceptable meal, like his friends.

The trouble with most public schools is that they perpetuate the same mistakes, false beliefs, and lies that you have tried to dispel in your child. Public education is not intentionally evil or destructive—it's simply ignorant, and exposing your child to that type of ignorance can destroy years of careful teaching and explaining.

Dr. Shelton wrote that what now passes for education is "a miserable distortion of what it should be. The most vital facts of life are concealed and distorted. Each generation is thus forced to repeat the mistakes of the past, because it is left in ignorance of the vital forces and facts of life. When are we going to really begin educating our children?"

If you must place your child in public school, then you must also institute a home education program to combat some of the lies and half-truths that they will be taught. A child may grow very confused when

he is told one thing by his teacher and another thing by his parents. In such cases, it is best to explain to the child how different people think in different ways. Then you must guide your child toward developing his own way of thinking and reasoning.

In fact, your best defense against the indoctrination of public education is to teach your child at a very early age *to reason for himself*.

Dr. Shelton writes: "Always give the child a reason why he shouldn't pursue a line of conduct. If he is too young to understand the reason, tell him that he will be able to understand the reason later. Your child should be told why one way of living is superior to another way. Children should be allowed to use their own brains. The highest aim of education, whether it is at home or in the school, should be to help the child to attain rational self-control and righteous self-determination."

4.2 Trouble at Home

Sometimes your greatest obstacle to teaching your child about healthful living practices may come from a spouse, grandparent, or other relative. For some reason or the other, one member of the family may feel negative or antagonistic to the teachings of Life Science or Natural Hygiene. Perhaps your wife or husband or mother or father is not in sympathy with your own healthy lifestyle. Such a split can make it difficult for the child to learn correct habits.

A classic example is the case of the father who was very much against the vaccination of his child before being admitted to a public school. The mother, however, could not understand why her husband was so upset. After all, she had been vaccinated, with no apparent harm, so she could not support her husband in this decision.

The child was caught in the middle. His father told him that all shots were harmful and needless; his mother told him that the doctor would have to give him a shot before ho could go to school. No matter what happened after that, the child would lose respect for one or the other parent.

If your spouse or a close family relative is absolutely dead set against your new healthful living practices and teachings, then you will have to reach some sort of arrangement. Parents who argue and fight continually do as much emotional harm to the child as any unhealthful habit.

The parents and relatives of the child must *agree among themselves* as to the approach to take in teaching the child. It is far better for both parents to strongly support some type of compromise approach than for them to be at odds. If a child sees the parents are not in agreement, then he may use one or the other to get his own way.

In this case, it is best that the parent who strongly advocates a healthful lifestyle to be a shining example to the child. By presenting a positive, happy, and enthusiastic example of health to the child, the parent will have a greater effect than the negative influences of the other spouse.

4.3 Trouble at Play

Another obstacle to teaching the child about healthful living may be playmates and friends of the child. Children who were not raised Hygienically may expose your child to negative habits. Realize that such exposure is inevitable, sooner or later, and that you must devise a way of dealing with these influences.

A child does not like to feel "different" or be called "strange" by his friends and playmates. He doesn't want to feel out of the ordinary or be an object for ridicule. The child should not be isolated from other children simply because they have negative or unhealthful habits. It is necessary for the child to learn at an early age that certain actions bring about certain results.

For example, any time that one of your child's friends or playmates is sick, ask your child why he thought that his friend was sick. Then show him how he rarely becomes sick because of the habits he has formed. Don't make your child feel superior to his playmates; simply show him how negative actions

and habits on their part produce negative results. In other words, try to help him learn from the mistakes of his friends.

Instead of having your child change his positive behavior to match the negative habits of his playmates, see if he can influence his friends to become healthier and happier. One way of doing this is to invite your child's friends over to share a meal with your family. If your child can share his health-building habits with his friends, then it becomes fun or like a game of discovery.

One excellent way to avoid strange feelings between your child and his playmates is to arrange a "Hygienic" style party for your child's friends. Serve them natural treats, and plan wholesome group activities for them. You may win a few converts, and you'll certainly be helping the other children in a small way.

5. The Rewards Of Teaching Your Child

You will be continually well-rewarded for your efforts in teaching your child. A child who has learned the ways of healthful living will be cheerful, free from disease or distress, and a source of enjoyment to the parent.

Dr. Russell T. Trall, a pioneer in the Natural Hygiene movement, wrote this about the outcome of teaching your children how to live healthfully:

"In youth, children are the dependencies of their parents, and subject to their government which may either be wise or foolish. When they enter the world, they will go forth either as useful members of society or constant annoyances and curses. Their eventual actions and character were predetermined long before their assuming personal responsibility. They are the products of their parents' teachings, and show the result of the care or lack thereof that was bestowed upon them from the time of conception to the day that they step into the world."

Finally, the words of Dr. Herbert M. Shelton should serve as inspiration for those of us who must teach the young how to live in this world: "We can build a nation of super-Venuses and Apollos, with minds as well-developed as their bodies and with splendid morals and lovely characters. As parents, your greatest charge is to acquire and make use of the available knowledge in teaching children how to live a healthy, happy, and long life."

6. Questions & Answers

What should you do when you discover your child going against the teachings you gave him? My youngest son who is twelve has been chewing tobacco with his friends.

> The best reaction is to be unemotional and logical when you talk to your child about such a problem. By the age of ten or so, you can start treating your child as an adult. You tell him that he alone will have to take full responsibility for his actions, and that if he suffers or becomes sick because of his habits, then it is his fault. Many people, both adults and

children, indulge in destructive habits because they do not understand the eventual outcome, or they believe that the evil they do may be undone by medicines, doctors, or other treatments. If your child fully understands that he alone is responsible for his health and happiness or sickness and misery, then he may act more responsibly

All children experiment with "bad" habits that they may pick up from their peers. If you do not overreact (which is what the child is sometimes seeking), then the habit may be dropped. Incidentally, children often do just the opposite that is told them in order to get some sort of attention. Show no outward concern and worry, but make sure that you increase the amount of love and attention you give a child that is indulging in bad habits. This positive reinforcement, instead of a negative and emotional outburst, will impress the child and lead him back to the healthful habits that you have taught.

I became interested in health after my children were in school. It's hard to get them to change to my new life.

Why should you expect your children to make a change that took you twenty years longer to do? The people who first realize the truth about health may be the blindest when it comes to accepting the shortcomings of others

The approach to take when this occurs is to make all of your new healthful habits part of your old lifestyle. Children distrust and fear radical changes in their parents, and it may confuse or repel them. They may react so negatively to these changes in a parent that they will overindulge in destructive habits, as a way of asserting their own independence from the parent

The best way to handle this is to try to get the entire family involved in your new healthful lifestyle. Let them discover the advantages of healthful living along with you, instead of you presenting it to them. Involve them with your hew lifestyle, diet, and exercise program. Let them help plan the meals, exercise along with you, and just be generally a part of an exciting new adventure in health

At this stage, it is important to emphasize the positive sides of this lifestyle, and not dwell upon the old negative habits. For example, instead of telling your children that there will be no more candy in the house, tell them that you will be getting delicious dried fruit, dates, raisins, and nuts for them as a snack. In other words, always make the child believe that healthful habits mean more fun, more life, and more things to do. Don't make health a "negative" experience by telling the child he can't eat that or he mustn't do this or he shouldn't act this or that way

Children react strongly to positive, new changes. If you present your new lifestyle as a way of having more fun instead of denying old pleasures, then the children will follow you gladly.

The only problem I've had in teaching my child is that he doesn't want to be different from his playmates. He can't understand why he can't have a "Kool-Aid" sales stand or eat candy bars, and he doesn't like the kids making fun of his lunches.

You will have to be more creative. You can make your child "candy" from various dried fruits, or suggest that he sell fresh fruit juices instead of junk beverages with the kids. Invite his friends over to lunch some day and go all out for a great Hygienic meal

Don't let your child become isolated because of his healthful habits. Encourage him to play

with his friends, regardless of their differences, and make sure you give him enough support when he needs it. Also, try to anticipate any situations that may make your child feel uncomfortable, and do your best to smooth the way

Every child, at some time or the other, will be teased for being different in some way. If you remain supportive and demonstrate unreserved love for the child, then such situations will not be harmful.

Article #1: Does Your Child Have Eating Problems? by Joyce M. Kling

Overeating, undereating, eating poor foods, playing with food and fussing during mealtimes—does your child display any of these problems. If so, the first step is to find what causes them.

Finding Causes

Perhaps you have too many mealtime rules such as don't talk, sit still, eat everything on your plate, don't make a mess, etc. All these rules may make your child uncomfortable and cause him to fidget when he should be relaxed.

Do you condemn him for his eating habits? This may make him insecure and the problem may grow rather than dissipate.

If your child is angry at you for something and knows that certain eating patterns are likely to "get" you, he may just try them. If your child feels unloved, either because of jealousy of a sibling or because you've been less attentive than he feels you ought to be, he may undereat, overeat, or fuss to get your attention.

If you're fanatical about his diet, you may be causing him to desire exactly those foods that you don't want him to have. Idling a child that a certain thing is "bad" may make him more curious about it, especially since he sees so many other children eating it.

Finding a Solution

First, create a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere for your child's meals. Make sure that the chair he sits in enables him to reach the table and is comfortable. The area he eats in should be well-lit so he can see his food. Eliminate such distractions as TV, radio, frequent dinner guests, etc.

Don't make a big deal out of mealtime. It shouldn't be considered a special time of the day but an ordinary routine. "Special" times often mean that the child is supposed to behave extra good and may cause him to do the opposite.

Instead of condemning your child for his habits, try to understand his actions and explain to him why it's best to relax while eating, eat certain foods that are nutritious or to eat certain amounts for best health. Praise him when he behaves rather than punishing him when he doesn't.

Never force your child to eat if not hungry. It's best to let him skip a meal if he's not feeling well or is tired.

Liquids are best not served with meals. They dilute the digestive fluids in the stomach and also give a child a "toy" to play with. Children often pour their beverage into their foods.

Make sure there's variety in your meals. If you serve the same things day after day, he may get bored and not eat.

If you want your child to eat nutritious foods, teach him about them because he won't get this information from other sources. The influence of T.V. junk food commercials on children is amazing. T.V. commercials proclaim, "Aren't you hungry for...?" and then flash a big juicy hamburger across the T.V. screen thus enticing young viewers. Try to balance out the input he gets from peers, the media, etc., regarding foods and eating habits by setting a good example.

One mother who is raising her child on raw fruits and vegetables once let him eat his share of junk foods. He got very sick and she explained to him that that's what happens when you eat wrong things. He no longer desires what the other kids eat.

However, it's not always that easy. My son is always desiring junk foods and when he tried a hot dog, he didn't immediately get sick despite the fact that I had told him he would. He then thought I was lying to him. In this case, I still try to provide him with a nutritious diet and eliminate his exposure to junk foods as much as possible. He'll probably get some "bad" foods at times but it won't be as had as most children who get it all the time.

Get Your Child Involved

Get your child involved with the selection and purchase of foods, their preparation, as well as the after-meal cleanup, and he'll take a greater interest and may eat better. Ask him what he wants for dinner and you may be surprised how reasonable his choices can be. Then let him help to prepare the meal in as simple a way as possible. He'll show great enthusiasm and want to get involved more often.

My five-year-old son enjoys making his own "smoothies" and feels very independent when doing so. He usually sits still and eats it to completion afterwards.

Results of Good Eating Habits

Knowing that you don't have to "live with" your child's eating problems should be a relief to you. The effort you take to modify your child's behavior creates harmonious meals that digest fully. You'll all enjoy your meals more.